

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A wide area network printing system which is so configured that, in response to receiving print data from a contents server providing various information including the print data, a document server sends the print data to an image forming apparatus which is installed remotely away from the document server but is communicatively connected therewith via the Internet for printout, wherein:

the image forming apparatus comprises:

an accepting unit that accepts input of a document ID used in verifying that receiving of print data is permitted;

a sending unit that sends the document ID inputted into the accepting unit to the document server;

a receiving unit that receives print data from the document server; and

an outputting unit that outputs the print data, and

the document server comprises:

a storing unit that stores the print data sent from the contents server, and the document ID in association with the print data therein;

a print data retrieving unit that retrieves, from the storing unit, the print data identified by the document ID sent from the sending unit;

an accounting unit that calculates a fee relating to printout of the print data retrieved by the print data retrieving unit, and stores the fee as accounting data;

a payer judging unit that judges a payer of the fee relating to printout of the print data, based on the document ID;

a data sending unit that sends the print data and the accounting data to the receiving unit of the image forming apparatus; and

a controlling unit that controls the data sending unit to send, to the receiving unit of the image forming apparatus, the print data and the accounting data indicating that a print data recipient is the payer, if the payer judging unit judges that the print data recipient is the payer, and that controls the data sending unit to send, to the receiving unit of the image forming apparatus, the print data and the accounting data indicating that a print data provider is the payer, if the payer judging unit judges that the print data provider is the payer,

the image forming apparatus further comprising fee collecting unit that collects the fee from the print data recipient in the case where the receiving unit of the image forming apparatus receives, from the data sending unit of the document server, the accounting data indicating that the print data recipient is the payer.

2. The system according to Claim 1, wherein at least one of the document server and the contents server further comprises a client data storing unit that stores data relating to clients therein, and the payer judging unit judges whether charging is necessary based on the client data.

3. The system according to Claim 2, wherein at least one of the document server and the contents server further comprises print data altering unit that alters contents of the print data to be sent to the image forming apparatus depending on the client data.

4. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the controlling unit of the document server restricts the number of transmissions of the print data identified by the document ID to the image forming apparatus when the document server receives the document ID from the image forming apparatus two or more number of times.

5. The system according to Claim 3, wherein the document server further comprises a shop information storing unit that stores information relating to a shop where the image forming apparatus is installed, and the print data altering unit alters the contents of the print data to be sent to the image forming apparatus depending on the shop information.

6. The system according to Claim 1, wherein the controlling unit of the document server erases the document ID upon lapse of a predetermined period from the time when the document server receives the document ID from the contents server.

7. The system according to Claim 6, wherein the contents server sends, to a communications terminal, a warning message indicating that the document ID will be erased upon lapse of the predetermined period, before the predetermined period lapses.

8. A document server which is so configured as to receive print data from a contents server providing various information including the print data, and to send the print data to an image forming apparatus which is installed remotely away from the document server but is communicatively connected therewith via the Internet, the document server comprising:

a print data storing unit that stores print data sent from the contents server, and a document ID in association with the print data;

a print data retrieving unit that retrieves, from the print data storing unit, the print data in association with the document ID sent from the image forming apparatus;

a accounting unit that calculates a fee relating to printout of the print data retrieved by the print data

retrieving unit, and stores the fee as accounting data;

a payer judging unit that judges a payer of the fee relating to printout of the print data, based on the document ID;

a data sending unit that sends the print data and the accounting data to the image forming apparatus; and

a controlling unit that controls the data sending unit to send, to the image forming apparatus, the print data and the accounting data indicating that a print data recipient is the payer, if the payer judging unit judges that the print data recipient is the payer, and that controls the data sending unit to send, to the image forming apparatus, the print data and the accounting data indicating that a print data provider is the payer, if the payer judging unit judges that the print data provider is the payer.

9. The document server according to Claim 8, further comprising client data storing unit that stores data relating to clients therein, and the payer judging unit judges whether charging is necessary based on the client data.

10. The document server according to Claim 9, further comprising a print data altering unit that alters contents of the print data to be sent to the image forming apparatus depending on the client data.

11. The document server according to Claim 8, wherein the controlling unit restricts the number of transmissions of the print data identified by the document ID to the image forming apparatus when the document server receives the document ID from the image forming apparatus two or more number of times.

12. The document server according to Claim 10, further comprising a shop information storing unit that stores information relating to a shop where the image forming apparatus is installed, wherein the print data altering unit alters the contents of the print data to be sent to the image forming apparatus depending on the shop information.

13. The document server according to Claim 8, wherein the controlling unit erases the document ID upon lapse of a predetermined period from the time when the document server receives the document ID from the contents server.

14. An image forming apparatus which is so configured as to receive print data from a server via the Internet for printout of the print data, the apparatus comprising:

an inputting unit that allows a user to input a document ID used in verifying that receiving of print data is permitted;

a sending unit that sends the document ID inputted to the inputting unit to the server;

a receiving unit that receives print data identified by the document ID sent from the sending unit, and accounting data including information relating to a payer which is determined based on the document ID;

an outputting unit that outputs the print data received by the receiving unit; and

a fee collecting unit that collects a certain fee from a print data recipient if the print data recipient is determined as the payer based on the accounting data received by the receiving unit.